

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

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FM AMEMBASSY SANAA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2005

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

/ AMEMBASSY JIDDA 1017

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

USMTM DHAHRAN

USCINCEUR

S E C R E T SANAA 638

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MCAP, MASS, YE, MP, SA, YS

SUBJECT: MILITARY ASSISTANCE FOR YEMEN

REF: STATE 66153 (NOTAL)

1. I CALLED ON RECENTLY RETURNED SAG AMBASSADOR SUDAIRI APRIL 15 TO COMPARE NOTES ON YAR' S REQUEST FOR URGENT MILITARY ASSISTANCE. I EXPLAINED THAT I WANTED TO CONTINUE OUR CLOSE COORDINATION ON YEMEN JUST AS OUR TWO GOVTS WERE NOW DOING BY CONSULTATIONS IN RIYADH.

2. IN THIS CONNECTION, AND HAVING IN MIND DEPT' S INSTRUCTIONS TO JIDDA (REFTEL), I TOLD SUDAIRI I WAS HAPPY TO SAY I BELIEVED SAG WOULD FIND USG POSITION POSITIVE AND REFLECTING A SENSE OF URGENCY.

3. SUDAIRI RECIPROCATED DESIRE FOR CLOSE COORDINATION AND APPRECIATED USG' S RESPONSIVENESS TO YEMENI SITUATION. HE DID ADD ONE CAVEAT: SAG BECAUSE OF PDRY AND IRAQI AGGRESSION AT WADIA AND UMM QASR RESPECTIVELY HAD ALL ITS MILITARY EQUIPMENT FULLY COMMITTED. SUPPLIES FOR YEMEN COULD ONLY
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BE SENT AFTER NOT BEFORE THEY WERE REPLACED. DURING LAST FALL' S YAR- PDRY WAR, SAG HAD MET YARG EMERGENCY NEEDS

BY TAKING WEAPONS AWAY FROM ITS OWN TROOPS (E. G. 50 CAL MG' S); SAG COULD NOT REPEAT THIS ACTION IN VIEW CURRENT SITUATION.

4. SUDAIRI ALSO REITERATED HIS STRONG SUPPORT FOR PRIMIN HAJRI AND SAID SAG STEPPING UP ITS ECONOMIC AID TO YARG TO INCLUDE WATER WELL DRILLING PROGRAM. MINAGR TRSHIP STILL CONCERNED WITH CONTINUING POTENTIAL FOR PDRY ATTACK AND WE ANXIOUS SEE HOW WE COUD ASSIST. (SULTAN INQUIRED BRISKLY AS TO SOURCE OF YAR IMPRESSION THAT PDRY TROOP CONCENTRATIONS HAD BEEN REDUCED. AMB SAID HE DID NOT KNOW PRECISE SOURCE.) AMB NOTED HE HAD DAY BEFORE GIVEN DEPUTY FONMIN MOHAMMED MAS' UD USG ASSESSMENT OF PREVAILING INTENTIONS AND SITUATION PDRY AND IIAQ (REFTEL B) WITH REQUEST THAT FONMINISTRY' S TRANSLATION WHEN COMPLETED SHOULD BE TRANSMITTED TO SAQQAF, TO SULTAN AND, IF MAS' UD THOUGHT APPROPRIATE, TO KING FAISAL HIMSELF. SULTAN SAID HE HAD BEEN INFORMED OF THIS AND WAS LOOKING FORWARD TO READING OUR APPRAISAL.

2. AMB THEN OUTLINED OUR APPROACH TO PROBLEM OF ARMING YAR AS DESCRIBED PARAS TWO- FIVE REFTEL A. SHORT WRITTEN SUMMARY IN ENGLISH AND ARABIC HANDED SULTAN. (COPY BEING POUCHED.) AMB SAID WE BELIEVED IT IMPORTANT MOVE SOME SUPPLIES PROMPTLY IN ORDER BOOST YAR MORALE. IN DISCUSSING US WILL- INGNESS BEAR PORTION AIR TRANSPORTAION COSTS OF ITEMS TO REPLACE THOSE DELIVERED BY SAG AND YAR, AMB MADE CLEAR THIS WAS " PORTION" AND THAT AMOUNT WOULD HAVE BE NEGOTIATED. SULTAN OBVIOUSLY VERY PLEASED BY WHOLE PROPOSAL AND EXPRESSED HIMSELF BEING VERY MUCH IN FAVOR OF IT.

3. SULTAN THEN SUMMONED GENERAL KABBANI. LATTER HAS OVER LAST TEN DAYS BEEN WORKING WITH COL. VINCENT, CHIEF USMTM ARMY SECTION IN RIYADH, TO DEVELOP CONCEPT OF ANLYTICAL SURVEY OF YAR NEEDS WHICH KABBANI IS TO UNDERTAKE IN YEMEN IN NEAR FUTURE. SULTAN SAID HE SAW NORTH YEMEN REQUIREMENTS FALLING INTO THREE BROAD CATEGORIES:

(AL) TWO SQUADRONS OF AIRCRAFT -- PERHAPS SOME OLDER MODELS OF F-5. SAUDI ARABIA WOULD BE PREPARED TO ASSIST WITH TRAINING: " SOME OF THEIR PEOPLE COULD COME HERE, WE COULD SEND SOME OF OURS THERE. SOME KIND OF AIR ARM IS VITALLY NEEDED BY YEMEN AS A DETERRENT." ; (B) SOVIET TANKS POSSESSED BY YAR ARE TOTALLY SECRET

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OUT OF ACTION. YEMENIS NEED SOME KIND OF ARMOR, A BATTALION OR TWO; (C) YAR NEEDS, OF COURSE, IN ADDITION, THINGS AMB HAD MENTIONED SUCH AS MACHINE GUNS, 106 MM RIFLES, TRUCKS, ETC.

4. SULTAN THEN SAID HE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE MOST HELPFUL IF TWO OR THREE OFFICERS OF USMTM COULD ACCOMPANY GEN. KABBANI AND HIS TEAM TO YAR. THEY COULD BE " ATTACHED" TO AMERICAN EMBASSY, WEAR CIVILIAN CLOTHES AND PLAY HELPFUL PART WITHOUT BEING NOTICED.

5. AMB DECLARED WE RECOGNIZED THAT LONG- RANGE REQUIREMENTS ON LINES MENTIONED IN SULTAN' S CAREGORIES (A) AND (B) WOULD EVENTUALLY HAVE TO BE CONSIDERED. OBVIOUSLY WHAT WE BOTH

NEEDED TO DO AT PRESENT, HOWEVER, WAS CONCENTRATE ON THOSE THINGS WE COULD GET INTO HANDS OF YEMENIS QUICKLY. AMB DEMURRED AS TO SENDING US OFFICERS TO YEMEN, POINTING OUT THAT SANAA BAZAAR IS PROBABLY WELC PENETRATED BY TALE BEARERS FOR PDRY AND THAT IT WOULD BE HARD TO KEEP PRESENCE OF US OFFICERS CONCEALED. AMB EXPLAINED AGAIN TO SULTAN OUR PHILOSOPHY OF ASSISTANCE FOR YAR. USG IS NOW DETERMINED TO BE OF HELP BUT SEEKS ACT PRIMARILY THROUGH COUNTRIES OF REGION. IT CONTINUED BE IMPORTANT WE AVOID RISK OF US- SOVIET CONFRONTATION ACROSS BORDER BETWEEN YEMENS. TOO PROMINENT US ROLE IN NORTH YEMEN COULD LEAD TO SOME EROSION ONE OF YAR'S MOST VALUABLE ASSETS: AMOST UNIVERSAL SUPPORT YAR ENJOYS AMONG OTHER ARAB STATES, EXCEPTING ONLY IRAQ. SULTAN ACCEPTED MY VIEW AND SAID SUGGESTION FOR INCLUDING AMERICANS WAS " ONLY AN IDEA." AMB ASKED WHEN KABBANI PLANNING DEPART FOR YEMEN, TO WHICH SULTAN REPLIED WITHIN FEW DAYS.

7. AMB AND GEN SMITH SAW SULTAN FOR FEW MOMENTS AGAIN APR 15, PROVIDING OPPORTUNITY EMPHASIZE ONCE MORE DESIRABILITY MOVING PROMPTLY GET AT LEAST TOKEN SHIPMENTS INTO HANDS OF YAR AS BADLY NEEDED BOOST FOR ITS MOREALE. SULTAN SAID HE HAD REPORTED TO KING FAISAL PREVIOUS EVENING ON OUR PROPOSAL AND THAT KING GREATLY PLEASED BY POSITIVE EVIDENCE US DESIRE MOVE PROMPTLY ASSIST WITH STRENGTHENING YAR. KING SUPPORTED THREE POINTS MENTIONED BY SULTAN IN HIS REMARKS TO AMB. WE ASKED AGAIN WHEN KABBANI MIGHT BE EXPECTED DEPART FOR YEMEN AND WERE TOLD " NEXT COUPLE OF DAYS" AND THAT KING WANTS SPEEDY ACTION.

8. COMMENT: CHIEF USMTM AND CHIEF ARMY SECTION RIYADH HAVE BEEN MADE FULLY FAMILIAR CONTENTS REFTEL A AND UNDERSTAND ITS PURPOSE S. USMTM DOING ITS BEST FILL GAPS CAUSED BY KABBANI'S LACK OF IMAGINATION, INCLUDING SUGGESTION, WHICH KABBANI HAS ACCEPTED, CO- OPTING TWO CAPABLE YOUNGER SAUDI OFFICERS TO
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ASSIST. ADVANTAGE IN SITUATION IS KABBANI'S WILLINGNESS RESPOND POSITIVELY OUR IDEAS. BELIEVE WE CAN, FOR EXAMPLE, HEAD OFF SUCCESSFULLY SAUDI NOTON THAT SOME OF THEIR OLD TRACKED TANKS WOULD BE OF ANY VALUE TO YEMENIS. WE HAVE STRESSED THAT 106'S ARE EXCELLENT ANTI- TANK WEAPONS IN OTHER WAYS USMTM WILL CONTINUE PRESS SAUDIS IMPLM ENT FORMS OF ASSISTANCE WHICH CAN BE EASILY AND PROMPLTY ABSORBED BY IMPOVERISHED YAR ARMY. EMBASSY AND USMTM WILL ENDEAVOR EVOLVE FOR WASHINGTON CONSIDERATION SUGGESTIONS FOR COPING WITH SULTAN'S (A) AND (B) SINCE WE SEE THAT INEVITABLY THESE ARE GOING TO BE BROUGHT UP AGAIN. THACHERUNQUOTE ROGERS

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